4/2
244
[462]

When new fields are prepared, the first work of clearing them falls to the men. This work is done with a knife and an ax. The shape of this latter tool is the same among all the tribes: a wooden handle with a bulge at one end like a club; and a long, narrow, triangular piece of iron embedded laterally in the handle.

After clearing the brush, the men pile the rubbish at the feet of the large trunks and set it on fire. The tree, undermined at its base, finally topples over and remains where it falls.

[462] The women take charge of the other work of cultivation. This varies [57] very little from tribe to tribe, and even the various crops of manioc, maize, peanuts, rice, bananas, and sugar cane require only quite rudimentary special labor.

● 244
4/2 Manioc is the staple food of the tribes over most of the region we visited. The native cultivates both sweet and bitter manioc. The latter variety is the more widespread. To prepare the ground, the native woman uses an iron hoe, triangular in shape,

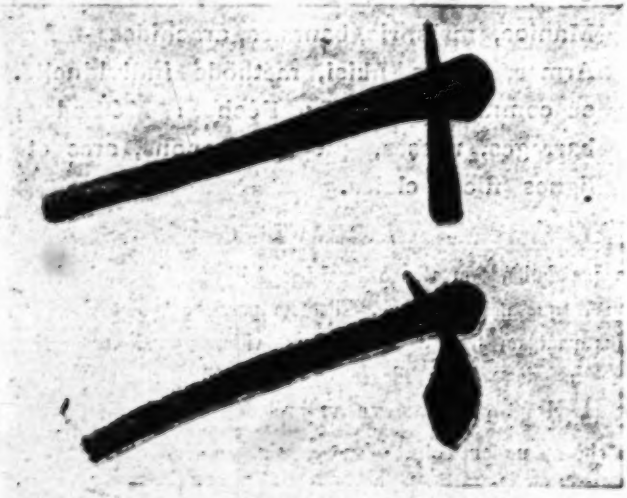

Fig. 37. Ax and Hoe from Lake Leopold II-Lukenie.

with a flaring base and a spike at the top. This piece of iron is embedded laterally in a rough-hewn wooden handle which bulges at the end like a club. The purpose of the club-like end is two-fold: it provides a better hold for the piece of iron, and it intensifies

Yaelima

244 4/2

the worker's efforts without, however, making the use of the tool too tiring.

244

After the first hoeing, the woman makes little mounds, 30 centimeters high on the average and spaced about 80 centimeters apart, and inserts four or five manioc cuttings into them.

The upkeep of the manioc fields is limited to one or two [58] hoeings to remove the weeds. Manioc requires extremely fertile soil. Its cultivation exhausts the soil to such a point that after three or four years the native must move his fields and abandon the cleared land.

Sweet manioc attains its maximum development at the end of a year, bitter manioc after 15 or 20 months.

Fig. 38. Initial Establishment of the Village of Longinpila in a Clearing, Batitu Tribe.

The manioc tubers or roots are gathered as the family needs them. The root is good to eat at any stage of growth and at any time of year. The maximum yield coincides with the maximum growth of the plant and not with its full maturity. The average yield varies between 12,000 and 14,000 kilograms per hectare. The native woman does not wait until the plants are fully developed to start exploiting the crop. She limits her harvest to a strict minimum throughout the rainy season. At this time the manioc, swollen with water, yields only a little flour and is easily spoiled by soaking.

M 243 The cultivation of rice serves less to nourish the native than for trade. He usually sells his harvest immediately after the husking.

T M 247 Peanuts thrive in the region of the Banfumu and among the Bankutshu. They grow best in light soil and are not suitable for land cleared from the great forest. The crop demands a great deal of care and regular upkeep. Fields invaded by weeds yield nothing. The harvest takes place when the crop is mature and is the task of the women with the help of the children. The peanuts are placed in baskets carried on the back and taken to the village. The native spreads them out in the sun to dry. He turns them again and again, two or three times a day, and brings them into the hut at night.

T M [462]

M 249 Sugar-cane plantations are set up in marshy lowlands. [462] All the work on this crop falls to the men. These plantations are found only in regions where the natives make masanga, sugar-cane beer. Sugar-cane fields are especially numerous in the villages on the lower Lukenie and the Fimi. [273]

M 244 As a rule the natives also cultivate a few legumes, sweet potatoes, and yams, but on a small scale and without giving them any particular care. [61]

Hunting

M 224 462 Hunting is practiced only by men. They engage in it, not for sport, diversion, or relaxation, but for the sole purpose of procuring meat and fat.

M 224 857 From their earliest childhood, the boys get together to beat the grass and catch mice, rats, and other rodents which swarm in the bush. Nothing is more interesting than to see them at work. Ten, fifteen, or sometimes twenty of them form a large circle. Armed with sticks, they beat the grass and make an unbelievable din. Little by little the circle narrows, moving in on a small well-cleared space. The oldest, most daring and most agile of the boys keep watch over this space, their eyes alert and riveted on the edge of the grass, ready to pounce. The beaters redouble their zeal, strike, shout, gesture, and gradually drive all the rodents

273 a sort of large basin resembling a canoe, two or four beating paddles, a strong stationary bar, a pressing apparatus made of lianas, a storage vat, and calabashes.

[244] [148] Sugar cane is grown communally on a rather large scale. The natives cut it shortly before it is fully ripe. Men, women, and children participate in this work. The whole harvest is carried to the brewery shed. The sugar cane, cut in pieces, is thrown into the mash tub, and two or sometimes four men crush it as much as possible with large beetles, reducing it to a sort of whitish pulp. When this pulp is sufficiently thin, the natives put it in the press made of lianas, which is attached so as to hang under the bar and over the vat. To keep the press from coiling up as a result of the twisting, they insert a stick in it perpendicular to the bar. Two men vigorously twist the press, squeezing out every last drop of the sweet juice. The liquid is caught in the vat and then poured into large calabashes and carried to the village. Masanga is truly pleasant, refreshing, and delicious when it is fresh. It has no intoxicating effect. The natives, however, do not drink it until it has fermented. They add to it the bark of a small plains shrub, put the waste from the sugar cane around the calabashes, and expose them to the sun for one or two days to induce very active fermentation.

Sugar-cane beer is always imbibed communally.

All the important ceremonies are accompanied by heavy drinking. Marriage, birth, death, burial, the return from important hunts, the appearance of the new moon, a visit from a neighboring chief, and even our arrival in certain villages are all reasons for organizing big native celebrations where the emptying of great numbers of calabashes of masanga is the order of the day. The natives gather in the shade of the big trees in the village or under the public shelter. The calabashes of masanga are set in the center or poured into big pots. Everyone drinks as much as he wants, as long as there is any left and as long as he can. Meanwhile, the music is in full swing, and there is singing and dancing. Hemp is very often smoked, and the drinking always continues up to the point of brutish drunkenness. It is hard to realize what enormous quantities of this heady beverage some natives can imbibe. Pokei, the Banfumungu chief at Engrei,